

Letters to the Editor

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Letters to the Editor

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Dear Editor,

We thank C. Johnston Molloy, C. Corish, J. Kearney, N. Hayes and C. Glennon Slattery for their letter in response to our article regarding dietary intake at child-care (Gubbels *et al.*, 2010a). The 'Healthy Incentive for Pre-schools Project' that Johnston Molloy and colleagues describe, seems to be a valuable addition to our study and the current evidence base in this area, as they assess the food served in addition to the food consumed by the children. We look forward to reading about their findings. In addition, they use photographs to determine food portion size and composition of foods (Molloy *et al.*, 2007). Photographs of portion sizes have been applied before for assessing parent-reported dietary intake in children (e.g., Reinaerts *et al.*, 2007). Although we definitely see the added value of using standardized assessment methods for dietary intake observation in children, we do not think that the use of this method would have changed our findings. Firstly, typical meals consumed at child-care in the Netherlands are snack moments and lunch breaks. The portions of the foods consumed at these snack moments and lunch (such as fruit, bread and biscuits), were quite unambiguous. Bread is for instance served in standard slices, biscuits are served per piece. In line with this, Nelson & Haraldsdóttir (1998) conclude in their review that many foods, such as biscuits, are served in easily identifiable portions, and do not require photographs to improve estimation of portion size. Moreover, we also observed the preparation for each meal. If the children were served pieces of apple, for instance, we observed the child-care staff member preparing the fruit,

and counted in how many pieces an apple was cut. Composite foods, of which the composition is more difficult to establish, were not served at the child-care centres. Also, diner (i.e., cooked meals), at which consumption of composite foods is more common, is usually not provided at child-care centres in the Netherlands. Nonetheless, we do agree with Johnston Molloy and colleagues that a food serving size atlas for pre-school children would improve standardization of research methods in this area, and we value their research efforts. Projects such as the 'Healthy Incentive for Pre-schools Project' appear highly relevant, especially since recent studies support the importance of child-care in determining pre-school children's energy balance-related habits, with children attending child-care at a young age being at a higher risk for overweight (Benjamin *et al.*, 2009; Gubbels *et al.*, 2010b).

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